

5) Workplan

I. Project Title and Project Purpose Statement

The “Mississippi Delta Child Lead Reduction Plan” aims to reduce childhood lead exposure in the Mississippi Delta. While all residents will benefit, we plan to specifically target our work to low-income black youth, who are the most vulnerable to the harmful effects of lead, and who are disproportionately affected by it. There are two main ways we will reduce lead exposure. The first is through education and outreach to help community members understand the harmful effects of lead and means to recognize and prevent exposure. The second is through developing an action plan to close off access to the most dangerous sites, and to form a long-range plan to reduce or cover lead contamination.

The project will begin in three pilot cities in Mississippi: Yazoo City (zip code 39194), Durant (zip code 39063), and Itta Bena (zip code 38941). Materials and best practices found in these pilot cities will then be shared with communities throughout the Delta (the Mississippi Delta includes the counties of Washington, DeSoto, Humphreys, Carroll, Issaquena, Panola, Quitman, Bolivar, Coahoma, Leflore, Sunflower, Sharkey, Tate, Tunica, Tallahatchie, Holmes, Yazoo, Grenada and Warren).

This project falls under the Toxic Substances Control Act, Section 10(a). The project will “conduct ... monitoring, public education, training, [and] demonstration projects” on lead, which is regulated by the Act.

The lead applicant on this project is the Mississippi Conference of Black Mayors (MCBM), a network of black mayors throughout Mississippi, and primarily in rural areas of the Delta. The partner organizations which have signed MOAs are the State of Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ); Mississippi Valley State University, a public university located in Itta Bena; and the Center for Economic and Environmental Justice (CEEJ), an environmental justice nonprofit located in Mississippi.

II. Environmental and/or Public Health Information about the Affected Community

There is incontrovertible evidence that exposures to lead, urban air pollution, and other environmental toxins tend to be more common in communities of color and low income communities. Despite significant improvements in environmental protection over the past decades, communities in the Mississippi Delta continue to live in unsafe and unhealthy environments. The Delta communities are burdened with older homes containing lead and the historical toxic legacy of the cotton mill.

Lead is prevalent throughout the Mississippi Delta, primarily in paint in homes and businesses built before 1978, when lead paint was banned. This is particularly concerning because the communities of the Delta are more likely to be more susceptible to lead-related problems due to having a higher percentage of children under age five, higher poverty rates, and lower access to health care and education.

Lead is a highly toxic substance that can cause severe health problems, including the breakdown of cells in the brain and central nervous system, kidney damage, high blood pressure, miscarriage and low birth weight in pregnant women, hearing loss, tooth decay, and more. The effects of lead are the most problematic in young children who are still developing, as lead exposure inhibits brain growth, leading to learning and developmental disabilities, reduced intelligence, and social problems such as ADHD and violent behavior. Because of all these potential health problems, it is absolutely necessary that we educate our communities on the effects of lead and ways to prevent exposure.

The Mississippi Delta is widely recognized as one of the most severely impoverished regions in the United States. The rich soils of the Delta (which is defined by the floodplains of the Mississippi River) have long attracted cotton farmers seeking their fortune. The story of cotton in America is a dramatic economic tale and, because of its connection to the black community in the Mississippi Delta, it is uniquely tainted. With the invention of the cotton gin in the 1790s the efficiency of cotton production increased by fifty times what a single person could process in a day. This new cotton production, in turn, provided the raw material for the booming industrial textile mills of the northeast and increased the need for slaves in Mississippi. In the 1850s, slavery in the Delta expanded and plantation owners became increasingly wealthy due to the enormous fertility of the soil and the high price of cotton on the market. For more than 100 years, the country benefited enormously from cotton picked by Black Americans.

After the Civil War, many freed slaves attempted to run their own farms, but struggled to make enough money to get by, and were often forced to abandon their land. Families began leaving the rural areas of the Delta to larger cities with better job opportunities. Some took jobs in cotton mills and gins in the Delta owned by large agribusiness companies, which became the center of many towns' economies. However, even many of these mills closed down as newer and better technologies were invented, resulting in massive layoffs that devastated the economy and society of the towns that depend on them. The population of the rural towns of the Delta has dropped dramatically in the last century, and those left behind struggle with the remnants of the former industry. The Mississippi Delta, once hailed as the "cotton kingdom", is now characterized by abandoned mills and economic distress, and the severe wealth inequalities that existed between the white

landowners and the black work force in the 1800s continue to this day. The demise of cotton left in its wake many rural communities in dire economic and social straits.

Yazoo City, one of the pilots of this project, is a perfect example of how these challenges lead to health and environmental concerns. Yazoo City's economy has been built around cotton since it was founded; it is one of the few river ports that was able to ship cotton south during the rainy seasons, when the Mississippi was impassable. A cotton mill in the center of town was the main employer of in the city, but it was destroyed in a fire in 1937 and never reopened. With the mill went many of the other businesses and jobs in the town, leaving behind abandoned, blighted buildings.

Abandoned mills still stand today in the center of Durant and Yazoo City as continuing toxic legacies affecting the predominantly black community. These now long abandoned mill sites are havens for drug deals and criminal activity and expose the community to further environmental contamination from the crumbling lead and asbestos building structures. The failure to cleanup these sites translates into potentially more exposure to toxics, and the very existence of these derelict cotton mills shrouded in some toxic mystery has a suffocating effect on the community spirit.

Like many Delta communities, the pilot cities' population has declined steadily with its economy, and very little new construction has occurred. As a result, the majority of the buildings, both homes and businesses, were built prior to 1978, when lead paint was banned in the U.S. In fact, the three pilot communities have a much higher percentage of old homes than the state of Mississippi and the U.S. as a whole (see Table 1) – approximately 2/3 of homes are old enough that they are likely to contain lead paint. This means that families with young children in our communities are at a high risk of exposing their children to lead paint. In addition, community members worry about local youths who like to break into the old cotton mill and other abandoned buildings and hang out, potentially exposing themselves to lead and other environmental hazards.

Lead is a serious problem in the Delta not just because it is more prevalent here than in other communities, but because the residents of the Delta are more likely to be negatively impacted by lead. All of the pilot cities have a higher percentage of children under 5 than the rest of the state and country (see Table 1). Because children are especially vulnerable to the effects of lead, this suggests an extra need for the education of parents to protect their children during their developmental years.

The Delta has the highest percentage of families living in poverty in the state of Mississippi. The Delta communities face higher unemployment, lower household income, and a higher percentage of the population under the poverty level than the rest of the state (Table 1).

The poverty levels in our pilot cities and state are dramatically higher than the rest of the country – 48.6% of the population is under the poverty line in Yazoo City, compared to only 14.9% nationally. This is relevant because lower-income populations are more likely to be unable to maintain their homes to prevent peeling paint and other lead hazards, creating a disproportionate impact on Delta communities. According to tests performed by the Mississippi Division of Medicaid, of children found to have elevated blood lead levels, 92% were eligible for Medicaid (i.e. were low-income). Assisting families with limited resources with the implementation of simple measures to reduce the risk to their children's health is an important and necessary community service, and one that is completely lacking today.

Health burdens for other diseases are unusually high in the Delta as well. The obesity rates in Mississippi are some of the worst in the U.S., and those in the Delta are the highest of all (Table 1). All three of our pilot communities lack reliable public transportation and have few sidewalks, giving Delta residents few opportunities for physical activity. Asthma is also a major health concern, with a significantly higher number of residents visiting the emergency room for asthma symptoms from the Delta communities. We need to address all these combined health-related issues to bring our residents' standard of living up to what they deserve.

Finally, all these health and environmental issues are exacerbated by poor access to healthcare. More people in the Delta and the pilot communities lack health insurance than the national average (Table 1), so they are unlikely to receive regular doctor's checkups. Without regular health maintenance, it's unlikely that the early signs of lead poisoning will be detected, exacerbating the condition. Low healthcare access also burdens residents with other health issues, such as asthma and obesity, leading to additional serious health issues.

To address toxic exposure requires addressing housing, transportation, community investment patterns, access to health care, pollution sources and sanitation, as well as health education. Working through our network of Black Mayors, the goal of this project is to work closely with our community leaders providing them with the necessary public health skills so they can carry out intervention work in their communities in a culturally and racially appropriate way.

Table 1. Demographics of the Project Area and Pilot Cities

	Yazoo City	Durant	Itta Bena	Mississippi	U.S.
Population ¹	11,517	2,599	2,017	2,986,450	313,914,040
Children under 5 ²	9.3%	11.0%	8.0%	7.1%	6.5%
African American ²	82.5%	85.3%	89.5%	37.0%	12.6%
Under poverty level ³	48.6%	41.0%	41.1%	22.3%	14.9%
Unemployment ³	15.6%	11.7%	11.3%	10.6%	6.0%

	Yazoo City	Durant	Itta Bena	Mississippi	U.S.
Median household income ³	\$20,041	\$22,657	\$23,726	\$38,882	\$53,046
Homes built before 1980 ³	62.9%	60.6%	72.2%	47.6%	57.4%
No health insurance ³	18.5%	21.4%	16.9%	17.6%	14.9%
Obese ⁴	38.2%	41.3%	40.6%	34.5%	27.5%
Asthma emergency room visits per 10,000 population ⁵	53.3	46.1	93.8	42.2	---

Data Sources:

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (PEP), 2012

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimate, 2008-2012

⁴ Centers for Disease Control, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2010. Statistics for the pilot cities are reported for the respective county, as city-level data was unavailable – Yazoo County (Yazoo City), Holmes County (Durant), and Leflore County (Itta Bena)

⁵ Mississippi Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 5-Year Estimate, 2003-2007. Statistics for the pilot cities are reported for the respective county, as city-level data was unavailable – Yazoo County (Yazoo City), Holmes County (Durant), and Leflore County (Itta Bena)

III. Organization's Historical Connection to the Affected Community

The Mississippi Conference of Black Mayors (MCBM) was founded in 1974 with the mission to promote and develop program models designed to improve educational, economic, health and social levels within member mayors' jurisdictions. The MCBM represents 87 municipalities throughout the state, with the majority coming from smaller, rural towns, particularly in the Mississippi Delta. Members join voluntarily in order to benefit from the collaboration and support that the MCMB network provides, and the number of towns that continue to be involved over the years is a testament to the value of the group. We hold regular conferences on subjects of interest to our members, providing a supportive network for managing difficult problems. Feedback on the issues that the mayors are most concerned about (healthcare, funding, environment and sustainability, etc.) determines what we focus on, as we truly are a member-driven organization.

Over the past year, the MCBM has started a major program to promote sustainability and health in its member communities, the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI). NTI believes that a clean and safe environment is every person's birthright, not a privilege exclusively for the wealthy and well-connected. Because pollution and contaminated environments are more likely to hurt low-income people of color, safeguarding the natural environment can't be separated from promoting social justice. All people have a right to a world free of exposure to harmful chemicals in our air, water and food, where children grow up healthy with every opportunity to thrive. We are having a major kickoff meeting for this

initiative on March 8, with all of our members attending. Through the NTI, the MCBM is working to serve as the connecting force that will drive change for the better in its member communities.

Many times our mayors hear great ideas from community members, but their small, rural governments have few staff and lack the resources to implement even the simplest projects. Low capacity means that these mayors often are unaware of or are intimidated by funding sources such as federal grants and foundations. Recognizing this challenge, MCBM has been working to build the capacity of our members to seek out funding needed to implement their ideas. Strategies include pointing cities in the direction of funding resources that might be helpful, providing assistance with grant applications, and connecting state and federal leaders with local applicants. Successful applicants can then use the network of the MCBM to educate other members, so in this way the benefits of this capacity building are shared and spread throughout Mississippi.

As the mayors of their communities, the members of the MCBM work hard to listen to their citizens' concerns and advocate for strong, healthy communities. Mayor McArthur Straughter of Yazoo City, Mayor Thelma Collins of Itta Bena, and Mayor Tasha Davis of Durant are all committed to strengthening the health of their communities. All three have heard from their communities that promoting a healthy and safe environment is important. Residents of the Delta consistently rank poorly on health measures such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, and the environment is a huge contributing factor. For example, Itta Bena's only grocery store closed 10 years ago, and the city found that this has led to over 70% of low-income residents travelling over 30 miles to find low-cost fresh food. In addition, most roads in the pilot communities lack sidewalks or are otherwise unfriendly to pedestrians, leading to few people walking, even for short distances. These and other factors have led the mayors and the MCBM to believe that promoting health in their communities will require not just personal changes by residents, but local government support for healthy environments that are sustainable and free of factors that contribute to poor health.

One way that the mayors are addressing local health issues is through the Delta Health Councils, a program of the State of Mississippi Department of Health. Mayor Collins of Itta Bena and Mayor McArthur Straughter of Yazoo City have made the health of the cities' residents a top priority by forming Mayors' Health Councils and applying for a grant from the state to fund the councils' work. Itta Bena successfully received funding for this year, and while Yazoo City did not, they plan to reapply in future grant cycles.

The Itta Bena Health Council is formed of local community leaders dedicated to improving health outcomes. Some of the projects they are working on include installing sidewalks and

other walking paths to promote physical exercise, a monthly walk-a-thon class for residents, implementation of a “no fried food” policy at local churches, the installation of a community garden and farmer’s market, and the development of a no-smoking ordinance in public spaces. The Health Council holds monthly public meetings to discuss its work, and plans major outreach campaigns to promote healthy eating and physical exercise. They have partnered with a range of local groups, including the parent-teacher-student organization at the local school, the County Extension service, and local churches. Building residents’ capacity to make healthier choices on their own, while simultaneously making it easier for them to do so, is a key feature of the Health Council’s goals. Using the MCBM and the NTI as a platform, the successful programs and lessons learned in Itta Bena will be shared with other Delta communities.

IV. Project Description

- i. A concise description of the activities the project will undertake during the two year project period to examine and address the environmental and/or public health issue(s), e.g., training, education/outreach programs, capacity-building efforts, research etc.

The goal of this project is to reduce childhood lead exposure in the Mississippi Delta. While all residents will benefit, we plan to specifically target our work to low-income black youth, who are the most vulnerable to the harmful effects of lead, and who are disproportionately affected by it. In addition, we will use this program as a leveraging tool to educate our community on environmental health skills using our network of black mayors as community conduits. Specific goals to achieve our mission are described below. Utilizing the CPS model under the leadership of the MCBM, the three pilot cities (Yazoo City, Durant, and Itta Bena) will form a partnership working in close collaboration with the State Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), the Center for Economic & Environmental Justice (CEEJ), and Valley State’s Environmental Health program.

There are two main ways we will reduce lead exposure. The first is through education and outreach to help community members understand the harmful effects of lead and means to recognize and prevent exposure. The second is through developing an action plan to close off access to the most dangerous sites, and to form a long-range plan to get rid of lead contamination. We will use community feedback and input during the outreach step to guide our action plan to the locations where lead exposure is most problematic.

Education and Outreach

Our education program will bring together members of the community, local governments, and health professionals to work together to address the problem. In the pilot cities, the partnership will hold a series of community meetings where they will provide information

on the health impacts of lead poisoning, common sources of lead exposure in the area, and ways to prevent lead exposure. The MDEQ and Valley State will provide the technical expertise and will leverage their existing educational tools regarding lead poisoning for the community meetings. In addition, the meetings will use group discussions and roundtables with community members to help the partnership understand the community's most significant lead and environmental concerns, where the government's help is most needed, and to hear community member's ideas on how best to address lead exposure. CEEJ will use its experience with communicating health information to environmental justice communities to ensure that the community meetings are culturally appropriate. Finally, Valley State will utilize its existing equipment to detect lead. Community members will be invited to bring the toys or other belongings of their children to the meetings where they can be tested for lead residue. We will record the results of this test, and also offer special outreach to community members with positive results.

To reach out to community members who are unable to attend the meetings, students from Valley State will go door-to-door with toolkits explaining lead poisoning and how to prevent it. Because it will not be possible to completely remove lead contamination from residents' homes, the toolkits will emphasize low-cost steps people can take to reduce exposure, such as handwashing, cleaning/removal of any peeling paint, and measures to limit lead dust. The students will also use this time to informally discuss residents' concerns and suggestions, as was done during the workshop. CEEJ will use their community outreach expertise and tool kit to teach the students how to ask questions and what information will be most helpful.

Using this experience and the past expertise of partner organizations, the partnership will prepare a "Lead Education Plan" which summarizes lessons learned and provides a model for other Delta communities to recreate the outreach program. This plan will include presentations and tool kits designed to build community capacity and understanding.

Lead Contamination Action Plan

The final step is to use the input from the community to set priorities for local governments to address sources of lead exposure that individual residents cannot manage on their own. The partnership will identify the most significant problem areas in each of the three pilot cities. An initial list of sites to investigate will be created based on a number of inputs: community member suggestions, local government priorities, and likelihood for lead to be present (based on the age of the building and a visual inspection for paint). In general, this list will focus on abandoned buildings, public sites, and other non-private locations. However, if it is determined by the community that the greatest risk is in private homes where low-income residents lack the resources to remove lead, then they will be included

as well. Any sites where there is uncertainty about the potential level of lead will be tested by Valley State staff using their lead detection equipment.

The MCBM will then work with the local government and community leaders to prioritize sites based on: potential risk of exposure to sensitive populations, including children and low-income communities, the ease with which the exposure could be prevented (i.e., can it be easily painted over or fenced off), and community support for addressing this particular project. The draft lists will be discussed at community meetings and posted for community feedback in appropriate venues as determined by the local government (for example: online, local gathering places such as churches, city offices, etc.). For each prioritized site, the partnership will brainstorm actions that can be taken to reduce access or exposure to lead-contaminated properties. These may include temporary measures such as fencing or security patrols, as well as long-term plans to cover or abate lead contamination. These "Lead Action Plans" for each city will both prioritize the city's lead removal goals and identify potential funding to accomplish these goals. MDEQ will help the local communities understand what is technically feasible and, if applicable, what legal requirements are involved with proposed mitigation plans.

Key to any abatement plan will be identifying funding sources for cleanup. The partnership will investigate federal programs such as HUD Lead Hazard Reduction grants and EPA Brownfield Cleanup grants. The leadership of the pilot cities will use the community plan and prioritization as momentum to apply for the most appropriate funding sources for their community. If successful, the mayors of the pilot cities will mentor mayors and government employees in other cities throughout the Delta, with the MCBM serving as a connection. In this way the "Action Plans" will build local government capacity to remove lead hazards from their communities. MCBM already has experience in helping local governments apply for funding sources that they would not have considered in the past, and is well-placed to assist with this effort.

Timeline/Outputs/Outcomes

See the attached "Project Performance Measures" for more details on outputs and outcomes.

After 6 Months

- Prepare presentation materials for community meetings, including presentations, posters, surveys, and toolkits
- Plan and schedule three community meetings (one in each pilot community)
- Hold community meetings (due to scheduling conflicts, the meetings may be held in this or the next 6-month period)

After 1 Year

- Prepare outreach materials for door-to-door outreach, including toolkits and surveys
- Perform door-to-door outreach to 100 households in each pilot community
- Evaluate best practices to produce the “Lead Education Plan” containing toolkits, presentations, and steps to be replicated in other MCBM/Delta communities

After 1 Year, 6 Months

- Evaluate survey responses to determine residents’ greatest concerns regarding lead
- Convene partners and community leaders to assess survey results and create a list of high-priority lead sites in the community
- Prioritize lead-contaminated sites within the community and create a plan to reduce access or exposure at these sites

After 2 Years

- Create a “Lead Action Plan” for each pilot community
- If possible, identify and apply for appropriate funding sources to implement some of the steps of the “Lead Action Plan”
- Document the process of creating the “Action Plans” in order to share with other MCBM member communities

Collaborative Problem Solving Model Elements Used

- CPS Element 1 - Issue Identification, Community Vision, and Strategic Goal Setting: Each community meetings where residents can discuss and plan what they most want to address in regards to lead poisoning will identify the issue and set goals. The “Lead Action Plans” are a coordinated effort to set clear, meaningful goals within each pilot community.
- CPS Element 2 - Community Capacity-Building and Leadership Development: The members of the MCBM will be better equipped to discuss lead-related issues, and will receive technical support from the MDEQ, CEEJ, and Valley State to apply for funding and implement the “Lead Action Plans.” Local community members in the pilot cities will be better educated about ways to reduce lead in their personal lives, and will better understand the impacts of lead on their families’ health.
- CPS Element 4 - Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Leveraging of Resources: The formation of the partnership itself will go a long ways. The technical expertise of MDEQ, the experience with community outreach and lead issues of CEEJ, the student and educational capacity of Valley State, and the structure and connections of MCBM will all leverage each other. In addition, the MCBM will use its membership

to share the lessons learned from this project, leveraging the pilot cities' efforts for communities throughout the Delta.

- CPS Element 5 - Constructive Engagement by Relevant Stakeholders: Community members who are the most at risk (low-income families with children under 5, and those who live in older housing) will receive support to limit their exposure to lead. All community leaders and local government officials will work together to prioritize their own community's concerns regarding lead.
- CPS Element 6 - Sound Management and Implementation: Partners will meet with each other via teleconferences and in-person to assess what is working and what is not. The best practices will be evaluated and selected to share with other members of the MCBM.
- CPS Element 7 - Evaluation, Lessons Learned, and Replication of Best Practices: The results of the outreach program in the pilot cities will be disseminated to all communities in the MCBM. Feedback from residents is a main part of the way we will set our goals.

ii. A concise description of how the organization and its partners will work together during the year to address the local issue(s).

The Center for Environmental & Economic Justice (CEEJ) is a non-profit community-based organization that was founded in 1989 in Biloxi, Mississippi. CEEJ's objectives include uniting grassroots organizations, consisting of citizens and other community-based organizations, to affect public policy on socio-economic development issues and environmental justice concerns that are germane to people of color and other ethnicities impacted by injustices. CEEJ has extensive experience with outreach to environmental justice communities, and has specifically worked on projects to educate residents about lead hazards. For this project, CEEJ will leverage its expertise with lead education to help the partnership communicate with residents clearly and effectively, and will utilize its knowledge about community outreach to assist with publicizing the meetings held as part of the project. Specific activities include: helping to design tool kits and presentations for the community meetings and door-to-door outreach, presenting at community meetings, and publicizing all opportunities for community input.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is the state branch of government that deals with pollution and contamination. MDEQ provides regulatory oversight of lead cleanup and abatement programs in the state. They are excited to part of the partnership addressing lead issues, and plan to incorporate the program, if funded, into their ongoing environmental outreach to rural, low-income, and environmental justice communities in Mississippi. MDEQ's role will be to assist the partnership in understanding

the technical issues surrounding lead, such as common sources of lead and best practices to reduce exposure, which will be incorporated into the community meetings and tool kits. In addition, MDEQ will assist with the "Lead Action Plans" by providing technical advice on abatement methods and legal requirements for any potential cleanup plans. MDEQ will also provide any needed state support for cities applying for funding sources for lead abatement.

Mississippi Valley State University is a public, historically black university founded in 1950. Located just outside of Itta Bena, Valley State has a strong stake in educating and enriching the communities of the Delta. Valley State's existing Environmental Health program will provide technical expertise, lead detection equipment, and will also serve to educate its students on lead contamination issues in the Delta, training them to be community leaders on this issue in the future. Specifically, student volunteers from the university will perform door-to-door outreach efforts, as well as assist, as needed, with preparation and presentation for community workshops. Several members of Valley State's Environmental Health faculty are certified to use lead-detection equipment. One of them will be on-hand at community meetings with lead detection equipment so that residents can examine the toys and belongings of their children for the presence of lead. In addition, the equipment may be used to determine whether to include sites on the pilot cities' prioritization lists. Finally, Valley State will assist with creating and measuring performance measures for the project.

As the lead partner of the project, the Mississippi Conference of Black Mayors (MCBM) will be responsible for all project implementation. The MCBM will plan and organize all community meetings, collect the results from the surveys, hold coordination meetings with all partners, use its membership base of mayors as a conduit to disseminate lessons learned from pilot projects, and coordinate local government's efforts to address identified health issues. The mayors of the pilot communities, who are members of the MCBM, will provide knowledge about their community, advice regarding outreach to community groups, and support for implementation of the "Action Plans."

All partners have a vested interest in improving the health and well-being of Delta communities, either as concerned community groups, public entities charged with health issues, or as residents of the Delta who would benefit from sustainable development. All partners will have a conference call or in-person meeting at least once a month to discuss project progress. Key contacts with each partner will be disseminated to members of the MCBM so that those wishing to replicate the program will have access to the resources needed, sustaining the partnership even after the grant period has ended.

V. Organizational Capacity and Programmatic Capability

The MCBM has a well-established system in place to ensure the appropriate management of this grant, consisting of both in-house and external expertise. Staff time spent on the project will be tracked via timesheets which every employee (both exempt and non-exempt) must fill out on a daily basis. Grant-related expenses will be closely tracked and monitored via monthly expense reports which employees must fill out to seek reimbursement. Each expense on the report is associated with a program area and, if applicable, a specific project. All of MCBM's day-to-day financial activities are recorded and tracked using Quickbooks. Every financial transaction is associated with a program area and, if applicable, a specific project. In order to ensure that MCBM meets all of its fiscal responsibilities, an independent certified public accountant experienced in the nonprofit world assists us in the preparation of monthly reconciliation reports and quarterly financial reports, which will be used to track the progress of the grant. The accountant also assists in the preparation of our year-end financial statements and federal tax returns.

The MCBM holds regular meetings and is experienced in organizing events, preparing materials for events, and communicating these events to a wide audience. For example, the MCBM recently held a series of workshops on seeking alternate or unusual sources of funding for projects in under-resourced communities. The workshops brought in a variety of funders from state and local governments, foundations, and technical assistance providers to discuss their programs and provide contacts to the MCBM's mayors. Participants appreciated how organized the conferences were and how useful the information was – a good indication of MCBM's ability to bring together diverse groups and manage events successfully.

In addition, the mayors of the pilot communities have been working to implement health programs in their own communities. They are experienced at reaching out to community groups such as grassroots organizations, churches, schools, and other local government partners for feedback and support and enjoy strong approval from their citizens. The "Mississippi Delta Child Lead Reduction Plan" will build on programs already in place at the conference level, such as the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, as well as programs the mayors are implementing.

We will maintain close communication with our partners, and regularly evaluate our work to adjust it if necessary. Community feedback and priorities are very important, so we will consider them in every step. Because we want to share the benefits of this grant with all members of the MCBM, we will document our steps and create a replicable set of steps for both the education and abatement portions of the project.

As necessary, we will use a competitive process that complies with 40 CFR Parts 30 or 31 to select contractors to assist with grant implementation. Contractors will be evaluated on a point-rating system by a panel of MCBM staff and other stakeholders to ensure that those selected have the best qualifications and ability to work in our communities.

The MCBM has not received any federal grants or cooperative agreements in the last five years. However, we are confident that our team, with the help of our partners, will be able to meet all reporting requirements to EPA's satisfaction.

VI. Qualifications of the Project Manager (PM)

The project manager, Silbrina Wright, has worked on issues related to improving local government and strengthening Delta communities for many years. She has organized meetings of many different stakeholders for a variety of purposes. She is especially adept at bringing together different government entities to help them cooperate; a particularly useful skill in the Delta, where local governments are often too small to implement a program on their own. For example, her work at the Sustainable Communities Development Group brought together local governments, faith-based groups, grassroots nonprofits, and elected officials to strategize ways to implement smart growth and sustainability policies in local communities. She has organized meetings from 10 to over 100 participants, and has extensive experience in bringing together disparate stakeholders.

As the former Purchasing and Contracts Director for the City of Canton, MS, Mrs. Wright is familiar with federal and state contracting requirements and has experience managing large fiscal programs effectively and accurately. She is also very experienced in understanding the issues faced by small and rural local governments. As the founder of the Small Town Area Planning Coalition, Mrs. Wright helped a coalition of ten counties to build alliances across communities, and identifies new approaches that address root causes of problems particular to rural communities. This knowledge will be vital to implementing any sort of plan at the local level in the Delta, where city resources are often limited, and efficient and effective strategies are required.

Mrs. Wright has extensive connections with the community and great relationships with the mayors of her member municipalities. She has worked on a number of programs in the Delta, including the recent Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, which is being sponsored by the MCBM. As part of her work with the MCBM, she regularly meets with small community mayors to discuss their concerns and issues of greatest importance to them; this proposal was developed using feedback she received on their desire to promote healthy, sustainable communities. She has a close relationship with the mayors of the pilot cities in particular, and has assisted them with a number of grant applications and other

programs in the past. Mrs. Wright serves on a number of state and regional boards designed to promote efficient and effective government, and is an active member of her community, serving on an advisory committee in Canton (a Delta town) to improve community life. Mrs. Wright is well known throughout the Delta for her work in rural communities and her particular concerns for low-income and communities of color. As a lifelong resident of rural Mississippi, Mrs. Wright is dedicated to helping her home grow strong communities and economies. Her enthusiasm for sustainable growth is infectious, and her commitment to the Delta and to Mississippi is clear to anyone who meets her.

VII. Past Performance in Reporting on Outputs and Outcomes

The MCBM has not received any federal or non-federal grants of similar size and scope in the past three years. However, we are fully confident that we will be able to successfully report on outputs and outcomes for this grant. Valley State University has agreed to help measure progress made in the grant, including documenting the number of community members reached with education and the decrease in lead levels detected on the belongings of children which will be tested during the project. In addition, Bishop Black at CEEJ has previously received an EPA Environmental Justice grant with a similar focus on lead testing. He will provide advice on reporting and help guide the partnership to meet EPA requirements. Additionally, MDEQ administers many federal grant funds for the state and they have agreed to assist with grant management for this important project.

VIII. Expenditure of Awarded Grant Funds

The MCBM has careful procedures in place for ensuring that our funds will be spent in a timely and efficient manner. We will use our workplan and timelines to keep on track for meeting our goals. Every quarter, we will assess the amount of funding used and remaining, and determine whether we are on-track to meet our goals. If we find we are not on track, we will discuss this with our EPA project manager immediately and determine the best way to proceed.

IX. Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) Information

Based on the QAPP checklist, this project will not require a QAPP.